

NPDA Rules of Debating (Modified June, 2008)

Changes made in the document: Clarifying language to incorporate "speaker" in the format of the debate.

The purpose of these rules is to define some goals and procedures of the debates so that, to the extent possible, everyone will enter the debates with a shared set of expectations.

These rules are designed to apply to the framework for debate rather than the substance.

They are framed in ways that attempt to allow many degrees of freedom in regard to debaters' creativity.

These Rules apply to the NPDA Championship Tournament. They also apply to any NPDA sanctioned tournament unless the director of a tournament publishes changes or alterations to these Rules in the tournament invitation.

Sanctions for a violation of Section 4 of the Rules of Debating and Judging (rules that apply during the debate) shall be the province of the judge. In the case of a dispute regarding a judge's interpretation of the rules, enforcement of the rules, or adhering to the procedures of the tournament, one or both debate teams may appeal a judge's decision regarding sanctions to the tournament director for a final decision.

Charges of violations of any rules other than those in Section 4, including violations of rules before and after the debate, should be taken to the Tournament Director. In the case of serious violations of these Rules other than those in Section 4, the Tournament Director will direct the Rules and Standards committee to review and rule on the decision. If the violation is upheld the Rules and Standards committee may impose a penalty ranging from reprimand, to changing of a decision or speaker points, to withdrawal of a team or judge from the tournament.

RULES OF DEBATING AND JUDGING

1. Resolutions
 - A. A different resolution for each round will be presented to the debaters at a specified time prior to the beginning of each debate. The specified time will be determined by adding fifteen minutes to the amount of time needed to walk to the most distant building in which debates are to occur.
 - B. The topic of each round will be about current affairs or philosophy. The resolutions will be general enough that a well-educated college student can debate them. They may be phrased in literal or metaphorical language.

2. Objective of the debate

The proposition team must affirm the resolution by presenting and defending a sufficient case for that resolution. The opposition team must oppose the resolution and/or the proposition team's case. If, at the end of the debate, the judge believes that the proposition team has supported and successfully defended the resolution, they will be declared the winner, otherwise the opposition will be declared the winner.

3. Before the debate

The proposition team, if they wish, may use the room assigned for debate for their preparation. If the proposition team uses the debating room for preparation, both the judge and the opposition must vacate the room until the time for the debate to begin.

4. During the debate

A. Any published information (dictionaries, magazines, etc.), which may have been consulted before the debate, cannot be brought into the debating chambers for use during the debate. Except for notes that the debaters themselves have prepared during preparation time and a copy of the NPDA “Rules of Debating and Judging,” no published materials, prepared arguments, or resources for the debaters’ use in the debate may be brought into the debating chambers.

B. Debaters may refer to any information that is within the realm of knowledge of liberally educated and informed citizens. If they believe some cited information to be too specific, debaters may request that their opponent explain specific information with which they are unfamiliar. In the event further explanation of specific information is requested, the debater should provide details sufficient to allow the debater to understand the connection between the information and the claim. Judges will disallow specific information only in the event that no reasonable person could have access to the information: e.g., information that is from the debater’s personal family history.

C. Format of the debate

First Proposition Constructive Speaker: 7 minutes
First Opposition Constructive Speaker: 8 minutes
Second Proposition Constructive Speaker: 8 minutes
Second Opposition Constructive Speaker: 8 minutes
Opposition Rebuttal Speaker: 4 minutes
Proposition Rebuttal Speaker: 5 minutes

D. Constructive and Rebuttal Speeches

Introduction of new arguments is appropriate during all constructive speeches. However, debaters may not introduce new arguments in rebuttal speeches except that the proposition rebuttal speaker may introduce new arguments in his or her rebuttal to refute arguments that were first raised in the Second Opposition Constructive. New examples, analysis, analogies, etc. that support previously introduced arguments are permitted in rebuttal speeches.

E. Points of Information

A debater may request a point of information—either verbally or by rising—at any time after the first minute and before the last minute of any constructive speech. The debater holding the floor has the discretion to accept or refuse points of information. If accepted, the debater requesting the point of information has a maximum of fifteen seconds to make a statement or ask a question. The speaking time of the debater with the floor continues during the point of information.

F. Points of Order

Points of order can be raised for no reason other than those specified in these Rules of Debating and Judging. If at any time during the debate, a debater believes that his or her opponent has violated one of these Rules of Debating and Judging, he or she

may address the Speaker of the House with a point of order. Once recognized by the Speaker of the House, the debater must state, but may not argue for, the point of order. At the discretion of the Speaker of the House, the accused may briefly respond to the point of order. The Speaker of the House will then rule immediately on the point of order in one of three ways: point well taken, point not well taken, or point taken under consideration. The time used to state and address a point of order will not be deducted from the speaking time of the debater with the floor. A point of order is a serious charge and should not be raised for minor violations.

G. Points of Personal Privilege

At any time during the debate, a debater may rise to a point of personal privilege when he or she believes that an opponent has personally insulted one of the debaters, has made an offensive or tasteless comment, or has grievously misconstrued another's words or arguments. The Speaker will then rule on whether or not the comments were acceptable.

The time used to state and address a point of personal privilege will not be deducted from the speaking time of the debater with the floor. Like a point of order, a point of personal privilege is a serious charge and should not be raised for minor transgressions. Debaters may be penalized for raising spurious points of personal privilege.

5. After the debate

- A. After the final rebuttal, the Speaker of the House will dismiss the teams, complete the ballot and return it to the ballot staff. The judge should not give oral comments before the ballot is completed and returned to the ballot staff.
- B. A running update of all teams' records will be publicly posted in a "warm room" or common area accessible to all tournament participants. After returning the ballot, the judge may, at his or her discretion, give brief constructive comments to the debaters. Such conversations should, if possible, take place in the established "warm room" area if one is designated by the tournament. No one may be required to enter the "warm room" or participate in discussions. Judges should refrain from checking the records of teams they are about to judge should such information be available.
- C. Debaters or coaches will refrain from arguing with judges' decisions or comments. Debaters or coaches who harass judges may be withdrawn from the tournament on a two-thirds vote of the Championship Tournament Committee.